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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to provide teachers with a sampling of before, during, and after reading strategies that are appropriate for use in K-12 classrooms. The paper first discusses diagnostic assessment methods in the classroom and presents activities which provide samples of informal diagnostic assessment. It then outlines some "before reading" activities which should access and build background knowledge, set a purpose for reading by creating curiosity about the text, and elicit personal reactions and experiences regarding a specific topic or character. The paper next sets out "during reading" activities which should motivate student reaction to ideas and prompt personal responses. "After reading" activities then presented in the paper should prompt reflection, help organize information, and promote deeper comprehension. The paper discusses on-going assessment and then describes how good (or "strategic") readers use a variety of strategies: good readers both activate prior knowledge and self monitor to read well; they are able to choose which strategies will best suit the text they are reading and the purpose of the reading assignment. Powerful reading programs are characterized by the following attributes: teachers and students read aloud; the environment is literacy rich; students read for pleasure; and home/school links are encouraged. (NKA)

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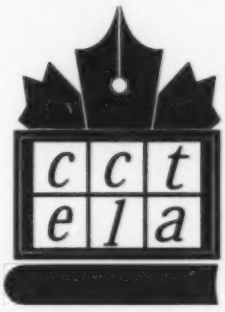
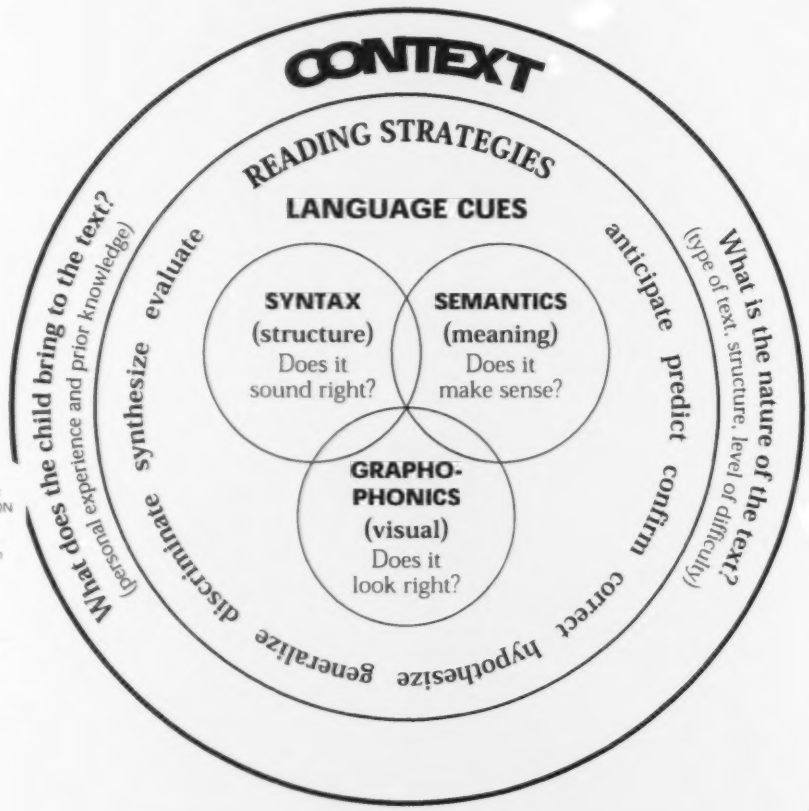


CANADIAN COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Literacy: Development and Teaching Strategies

by Liz Orme and Susan Masson



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This pamphlet is intended to provide teachers with a sampling of before, during and after reading strategies that are appropriate for use in K-12 classrooms. Suggestions for authentic reading assessment practices are also included.

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Diagnostic Assessment Methods

Before selecting strategies it is important to find out what the students in the class know and are able to do. Informal, classroom-based activities provide the most relevant information to teachers for the majority of students. A few simple activities can allow teachers to find out the answers to:

- What is the range of reading and writing ability in my class?
- Which students need extra support? Extensions? Challenges?
- What kind of help is needed?

The following activities provide samples of informal diagnostic assessment.

GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENT READING ABILITY

Select a section from a chapter of one of the textbooks you are using or a grade-appropriate short story. Introduce the selection by building some background and teaching key vocabulary. Have the students read (silently) the selection then answer a series of questions about it. Include questions which ask about main ideas, require the students to make an inference, and ask for a personal response. For non-fiction, require the students to refer to a graphic illustration in order to answer both a literal and inferential question.

READING ALOUD

Have each student select and prepare ahead of time a short passage (one or two paragraphs) to read aloud to you. As each student reads, check:
- Did the student prepare ahead of time?
- Is the student able to read fluently?
- What level of difficulty was the material that the student chose to read?
- Did the student correctly read all words?
- Was the student able to self-correct, if necessary?

ORAL READING IN PAIRS OR GROUPS

Have the students oral read with a partner, everyone in the class reading at once, while the teacher moves from group to group listening in on the students' reading. A similar effect can be achieved by asking small student groups to read aloud a play (each student taking at least one part).

READING RESPONSE

After the students have read a short story, poem or article ask them to write a personal response to the piece. Tell them you will be looking for their ability to:
- express opinions
- support their opinions with reasons
- describe personal connections with the reading

Before Reading Activities

These activities should access and build background knowledge, set a purpose for reading by creating curiosity about the text, and elicit personal reactions and experiences regarding a specific topic or character.

SORT AND PREDICT

This is a vocabulary building strategy in which students are given key words that are preselected from a text by the teacher. In groups, students categorize the words and predict what the reading will be about. Then they read and check their predictions in a discussion after the reading. A variation on this activity is to give students illustrations or other graphics from the text instead of words.

VOCABULARY ALERT

The teacher selects words he or she predicts the students will have difficulty with and writes them on the overhead. Students rate the words with a 1, 2 or 3. (1= words I have seen and used many times, 2=words I am somewhat acquainted with, 3=words that I have neither seen nor heard). The teacher ignores the words that receives a 1 rating, reviews in class discussion the words that received the 2 and directly teaches the 3s.

KWL CHARTS (I KNOW, I WONDER, I LEARNED)

Students access their prior knowledge about a topic before they read more about it. They list their knowledge in the first column (K) of a three-column chart. Then, they fill in the second column (W) with questions about the topic. After reading, they fill in the third column (L) and discuss their findings.

TEXT FEATURE SURVEY

Students work in groups to list all the features of the text that could help them read it. They should list the feature and explain how to use each one as they read. Usually noted items include bold or italicized words, chapter and section headings and subheadings, word or concept definitions in the side margins, chapter summaries, glossaries, pronunciation guides, chapter questions, diagrams and other graphics etc.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Ask students to reflect on what they already know about a topic for two minutes, then share their reflections with a partner or in small groups. In some cases, it is helpful to give the students some prior knowledge as a starting point before doing this activity. In this scenario, the teacher would share what

he or she knows about a topic before asking the students to do the think-pair-share.

ENDINGS FIRST

Tell the students the end of the reading selection and have them predict the beginning. This might be most appropriate with short items like newspaper articles and poetry. Students should also justify their answers as part of this activity.

During Reading Activities

These activities should motivate student reaction to ideas and prompt personal responses. Increasing reader awareness of the author's language and word choice, and facilitating comprehension of the selection are additional during reading activity purposes.

NOTE TAKING: 2-COLUMN NOTES, 4 COLUMN NOTES

Various forms of note taking can both help guide student reading and provide good study material. Over time, students should be encouraged to skim the reading and decide for themselves which form of note taking will best suit it. Two column notes have main ideas on the left side and supporting details on the right; four column notes include vocabulary, questions the students have about the content, answers to questions and other details and diagrams. For fiction, two column notes could require summary on the left and response on the right; four column notes could include plot summary, response or illustrations (setting, character, key events), questions about the story events and character behaviour and answers to the questions.

SELECTIVE UNDERLINING

This is for photocopied handouts, not school textbooks. Model the process for them first on the overhead as they follow. Underline selectively, choosing phrases instead of whole sentences, noting main points with numbers or asterisks, choosing different colours for main versus supporting details, jotting AHAs (sudden revelations) in margins. Do the process in a "think-aloud" way so students can understand your reading/thinking process before trying themselves.

HEADING QUESTIONS

Students can simply turn each heading into a question or prediction before reading to find the answer.

PAUSE AND THINK

As students read, they should pause and think to check their understanding. This can be a written or spoken process, but should eventually become internal. Typical pause and think questions include: Does this make sense to me? What do I think about this? Did anything confuse me? What do I think will come next? Do I need help with anything I've read here? What was this about in my own words?

PMI CHART

PMI stands for plus, minus and interesting. Have the students, as they read, categorize the information surrounding an issue into the three columns. After they read, they can share the information on their charts in groups and explain their own position on the topic.

STICKY NOTES

As students read a passage of text have them mark, using Post-it Notes™, three to five key ideas or points worth remembering. After deciding on the key points, have students label each "sticky" with a word or phrase to summarize the ideas they have selected before working with a partner to discuss and defend their choices. At this point, they may wish to revise their selections. Ask the students to write a summary paragraph of the important ideas (using only the sticky notes). This is also a good study technique to review for tests and quizzes.

VISUALIZE

Ask students to mentally picture in their heads as they read. If they find this difficult, tell them to either slow down and concentrate on the individual scene/picture or to actually shut their eyes every few paragraphs to reduce distraction and thus concentrate on their visualization.

After Reading Activities

These activities should prompt reflection, help organize information and promote deeper comprehension. Prior knowledge and new information should be integrated through analysis and synthesis of the reading material.

SAMPLE LEARNING LOG / READER RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Today we read / talked / learned about . . .
This reminded me of . . .
I liked the part about . . .
I understood the part about . . . but I'm confused about . . .
I wondered . . .

I noticed . . .
One question I'm taking away to think about is . . .
I kept my concentration by . . .

SUMMARIES - SHORT AND SHORTER

Students select, reject, and paraphrase to arrive at the main points as they read. Less successful summarizers read quickly and begin writing immediately. Successful summarizers read slowly, repeat reading (to monitor accuracy of their selections) and take notes as they go before writing. Teacher modelling with think-alouds is a great help to beginning summarizing. When summarizers get quite skilled, encourage them to write the more difficult one sentence summaries.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Students create a flow chart or time line of events in the order they occurred. The events-sequence should include both words and illustrations as students note the details of what they read.

FACT FINDER 5 W'S AND H

Create a chart with the headings Who, What, Why, When, Where, and How. Have students fill it in, then share their fact finding results with peers. Require them to cite the words or phrases that gave them their facts and write the facts in their own words.

TARGET ANALYSIS

Students work in groups with a target drawn on a piece of paper. As the group reads, they discuss what content might go in which target area. The target criteria are: centre ring: most important, most powerful, most crucial, most unique, central idea, main idea, first idea; first ring: next most important, next most powerful, etc.; each successive ring shows decreasing importance. After reading, they come to consensus on their in-process reading decisions. Their discussion should include explanation, elaboration, and justification of their reading decisions with references to the reading to support their views. Groups then share their target analyses with the class.

VENN DIAGRAM

This is a good compare and contrast method. Two overlapping shapes are drawn on a blank page. Similarities are listed in the intersection; differences are listed outside the intersection but inside the circles.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Initially, the organizer should be provided by the teacher. Over time, students should be encouraged to invent or choose their own organizer after skimming the text for clues as to what type of organizer would be the best to use or create. The act of skimming becomes the before-reading activity; filling in and sharing or writing from the organizer are the during and after reading activities. Examples of graphic organizers are the KWL chart, the PMI chart, the Venn diagram, sequence of events, target analysis. Other graphic organizers might follow the "shape" of the reading: an inverted triangle for the newspaper classic 5-paragraph essay.

On-going Assessment

READING CONFERENCES / SURVEYS

Interviewing students or surveying them about their reading habits is a useful way to assess their attitude about reading and to get an idea about their abilities as a reader.

ATTITUDE INVENTORY

1. I like reading fiction and/or non-fiction.
2. I like talking to others about what I have read.
3. I find reading difficult.
4. I think reading is important.
5. I enjoy reading a wide variety of types of books.
6. I often start books and don't finish them.
7. I like reading silently and/or orally and/or being read to.

READING INVENTORY

1. Do you like reading? How often do you read?
2. Are you reading something now? If so, what?
3. What kind of books do you usually read?
4. Do you have a favourite author? If yes, who?
5. Estimate the number of books that are in your home.
6. Where do you get the books you read?
7. How do you choose the books you read?

READING STRATEGIES SURVEY

1. How do you decide if a book is at an appropriate reading level for you?
2. What do you do when you come to a word that you don't understand?
3. What do you do when you come to the end of a section you are reading and you realize that you haven't under-stood what you have read?
4. Do you read fiction books differently from non-fiction books? How so?

5. Do you use illustrations to help you to understand material in:
   (a) fiction books? How?
   (b) non-fiction books? How?

TEACHER OBSERVATION

This strategy is considered an excellent, if not the best, way to assess student reading. Teachers should observe through a variety of methods and over time. Observations can include everything from pen and paper reading comprehension tests, listening to oral reading, observing the student's confidence to begin and complete a reading task, observing silent reading (head is steady, only eyes move, does not move lips, does not use finger or marker, stays focused on text) to evaluating writing that is based on reading.

READING CONFERENCES

These are an opportunity for students to discuss their reading with the teacher and/or other students and can occur in different ways. The teacher talks with a student about his/her reading and records student answers or writes brief anecdotal comments. The teacher may wish to display conference questions in advance of the conference or ask students to read aloud during it.

LEARNING LOGS AND RESPONSE PAPERS

Learning logs and response papers are quite similar. They are a chance for students to summarize, in their own words, what they learned from their reading that day and how they learned it (what strategies did the reader use?). Learning logs tend to focus more on content while reader responses tends to focus on the personal interactions of the reader with the text. These could also be done orally with the teacher as an alternate assessment method.

- Learning to read is a very complex process and there is no one strategy or philosophy that works best to teach it. There are three cueing systems used when a person reads: the graphophonic, the syntactic and the semantic; because each is essential to comprehending a text, neither a purely whole language nor phonics approach is appropriate. Both are necessary. Comprehension requires that readers use all three cueing systems to help construct meaning, but other strategies are also necessary. The reader constructs meaning by blending prior knowledge - that is, knowledge the reader already has - with information provided by the text in the context of the reading situation. Good teaching allows students to access prior knowledge and provides a variety of reading strategies that tap into all the cueing systems - thus creating fluent readers.

Strategies for Before, During and After Reading

Good readers use a variety of strategies; they both activate prior knowledge and self-monitor in order to read well. A good reader is also able to choose which strategies will best suit the text he or she is reading and the purpose of the reading assignment. A strategic reader:

- knows that the reading context, which involves both the purpose for reading and the text being read, will require particular strategies
- recognizes the task, decides the purpose for reading and selects strategies that match the task requirements
- checks comprehension levels throughout the reading (knows whether or not comprehension is taking place and can self-monitor stalled comprehension when meaning is temporarily blocked)

This has profound implications for the classroom teacher. Teachers need, whether they are choosing fiction or non-fiction material, to select well-written texts that are both explicit and have effective structure. Teaching strategies that activate prior knowledge are extremely useful ones for teachers to employ; teaching knowledge about text structure and strategies for self-monitoring comprehension are also very productive. Supporting reading in the classroom boils down to teaching students to access a text before their reading, during their reading and after their reading.

Categorizing a particular activity as either "before", "during" or "after" is relatively arbitrary. It is more important to facilitate student activity before, during and after they read than it is to worry about which category the selected activity fits into. Many activities work well in any of the three categories; many require before, during and after stages as part of their natural process. It is important to have the activities that support the reading connect to each other in a logical way. Otherwise, the activities become less an obvious support of the reading than a series of "make-work" assignments that seem, at best, out of context.

With any reading activity, it is also important to make the reading process overtly obvious to the reader. Students need to be made aware of their own thinking processes as they read. Teacher monitoring and probing of the students' reading, either in group or individual settings, is therefore useful. Questioning individuals helps prompt weaker readers; group setting questioning allows weaker readers to hear how stronger readers process and locate information. Ask readers where they got their ideas, from where in the text did their information come and what in the text prompted their decisions and reactions about what they read.

School-Based Reading Programs

Powerful reading programs are characterized by the following attributes:

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS READ ALOUD

Students need to hear good reading models in order to become familiar with the patterns and rhythms of written language.

A LITERACY RICH ENVIRONMENT

A variety of high-quality, age-appropriate reading materials are necessary for every classroom environment. Both fiction and non-fiction resources that are suitable for a range of reading abilities and interests should be included.

READING FOR PLEASURE

The reading time you provide in class may be the only time that some of your students engage in sustained silent reading; therefore, it is essential that classroom time be provided for this activity.

HOME/SCHOOL LINKS

Encourage parents to support their child's reading development. They can help by taking their child to the library, being reading role models at home, establishing consistent times for homework and pleasure reading and discussing what is being read with their child.

INTEGRATED AND AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Integrate the activities of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing in order to show students the connections between the varied uses of language. This also allows students to perceive how language is used differently depending on context and purpose. Students need authentic (meaning "relates to the world outside school") audiences, purposes and materials for reading, writing, listening and speaking because motivation or engagement is increased when such tasks are provided.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS' INTERESTS AND BACKGROUNDS

It is important to find out about your students' reading interests, backgrounds, abilities and learning styles. Teachers can play an important role both in accommodating these different needs as well as in extending students' learning by broadening their areas of strength.

VARIETY OF INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES

A variety of approaches are needed to meet the varying needs of developing readers, including the activation of prior knowledge and other before, during and after reading activities. Multiple opportunities for students to construct meaning and respond to what they have read, thus increasing students' comprehension of the text and helping them make new and different connections to the world outside school, are vital. During all this, teachers

must constantly reinforce for their students the fact that the goal of reading is the construction of meaning (rather than to simply sound out words or get the same answer that appears in the teacher's guide). Students need to understand that reading allows them to build and extend their knowledge base and their understanding of people, places, things, and themselves.

PROVIDE EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

Modelling provides explicit instructions in the "what" "when", and "why" of reading strategies; students profit from this explicit instruction in reading. Students need to know what a strategy is; how to use it; and when and why it should be used. For example, a student should understand what a main idea is, how to figure it out while reading and why it helps to think about the main idea.

ALLOW STUDENTS TO WORK IN AVARIETY OF GROUPINGS

The meaning in reading can be clarified, extended and revised through discussion and other methods. Groupings of all sizes allow students to improve their reading skills in a variety of contexts; this range of situations reflects the world outside of school.

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